

## Fear God

Here in the passage of scripture that we'll study today in Luke chapter 12, we encounter another of God's strongly given instructions about "fear". One that especially cautions us about "Who" our hearts should fear, and "why" we should have that fear.

For those of us who have Christ as our Savior and Lord, the subject of "fear" can sometimes be one of the more perplexing elements of our relationship with Him.

In our relationship with Christ, we cling to such words as those given to us in 1 John 4:18 that comfort us and assure us and tell us not to fear. Those words,  
18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. (1 John 4:18)

But then, we are also told in the Book of Proverbs chapter 9 that, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Thankfully, while these words of scripture seem to be telling us two very different things about this matter of "fear", we know that these scriptures never really contradict themselves. It's as Proverbs 9 implies, these words are simply being given from two very different contexts of understanding.

Yes, with the perfect love that the Lord Jesus has for us, and the love that the Holy Spirit puts within our hearts back to Him, we truly can rest in full confidence that we are eternally saved and eternally protected from losing our blessed salvation.

And because we can trust God's eternal promises to us, in our relationship with Him we really will never have to experience the fears that all the many unsaved souls will suffer. And what a blessing that is.

The only fears that we as His beloved children will suffer in our relationship with Him will be the fears that we will experience when we stumble and fall into some of the many sins that we encounter. It's then that God will be a faithful and Just Father who will be faithful to discipline us, just as all loving fathers must do.

And yes, that punishment from our Lord will often be painful, sometimes very painful. But that punishment will only be for a season, here in this life, and intended to restore and reclaim us back into fellowship with Him.

But with all of this being said, here in our scripture passage for today, the Lord Jesus wants each of us to know that there is still much to be known and to be understood about “fear”, both for those who have a blessed salvation relationship with Him and especially for those lost souls who do not.

Listen as I read today’s passage given to us in Luke chapter 12, beginning in verse 4,

<sup>4</sup>“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!(Luke 12:4-5)

These words were given by the Lord Jesus as He was continuing His journey on towards Jerusalem where He would eventually suffer and die on the cross.

But until then, He was continuing to preach and to teach the people, and especially to equip His disciples. He knew well that his disciples would be the ones who would carry His truths on to the emerging church. And so, as He often did, He took His disciples aside and He taught them the intimate truths that they would need to know and to teach others about.

Just before Jesus gave His disciples these stern words about “who they should fear”, and knowing that they would be tempted with the same kinds of sins that the Scribes and the Pharisees were practicing, He gave His beloved disciples some strong warnings against some of the sins that they might encounter, especially against the sin of “Hypocrisy”, that of saying one thing, while doing another, requiring righteousness of other people while still practicing unrighteousness themselves.

And He warned them that sin can never really be hidden, that no matter how they might try to hide their sin, it would eventually be made known, even shouted from the rooftops.

And His words are also a reminder to you and to me. Folks, that is the reason the Lord Jesus had these words recorded here in this bible, so that you and I might

also listen and know that the same is true for our own selves and for our own behaviors, that there is nothing, not even one thing that is hidden from God.

For you and for me, we need always to know that it is just as the words of Hebrews 4 tell us, everything that we think, everything we say and everything we do is laid bare before God, "the One to whom we must give an account."

In Psalm 139 we're told clearly that God even knows our inmost and intimate of thoughts. In those words of Psalm 139, God tells us that even before a word is on our tongue, while our thoughts are still within the hidden recesses of our mind, He already knows them completely.

And now here today, as we follow on with this passage, we see that Jesus is continuing to teach His disciples about all the many things they should know as they would carry His ministry forward, here giving them warning especially about all the many fears that they were sure to experience as they stepped forward into the battle with the world, the flesh and the devil, a warning that is also very true for you and for me.

Knowing that persecution would soon be coming upon His disciples, Jesus warned them that there would come a time, perhaps many times, when they would be threatened, mistreated, and perhaps even killed because of their faith. But that they should not "fear". They needed to remain faithful and to understand that the years they spend here on this earth and the things they would do here are only a small part of an eternal plan that God has for His people.

At another time, Jesus would teach them that although they would someday actually die a physical death, if they held fast to their faith they would never really die, that their life was actually an uninterrupted eternal existence that simply passed from one form of life into another, from living and breathing here on this earth, on into an eternal existence in heaven with God.

But Jesus knew that in the meantime even the thought of physical suffering and death would bring fear into their hearts. And that in the days that lay ahead of them, these dear disciples would surely face many occasions of fear.

And Jesus also knew all the many ways that fear can affect a person's heart. He knew that fear very often is so pervasive and so captivating that it can take

control over a person's mind and cause them to think and to do things that they should not think or do.

And for His disciples to be able to endure through their fears and overcome them, Jesus knew that they would need to be able to see past their fears, on past their short and limited days lived in their earthly bodies, on into the realms of eternal life. And so He told them,

<sup>4</sup>“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!(Luke 12:4-5)

Here in these words, Jesus is addressing all the many forms of fear that we will encounter. Some of the fears that we, you and I, experience, when received and used in the right way can be helpful to us. But other fears, received and used in the wrong way are harmful to us, even evil.

Those fears will never come from God, but will come from the world, the flesh and the devil.

And note here in our passage given in the Book of Luke, that in using the word “fear”, Jesus gives us two very distinctly different focal points of fear, fear of those who are able to harm and kill only our body, and fear of Him who is able to kill our body and soul in hell.

Let me take another moment and say again that “fear”, while often intense and sometimes controlling, can and does, often at the same time, have a very good side to it. And that “good side” of fear, will be at work even in some of the fear that Jesus is warning about in these words.

In its best application, fear is a form of “common grace” that God has given to all men and women, an intense grace that will guide us to take steps to preserve and to protect ourselves in times of danger. In the most intense of moments, men often will either fight or flee. And within that context, fear is often a good and necessary common grace.

That kind of “common grace” fear was probably the motivation that later on prompted the disciples to flee and to hide as Jesus suffered through His crucifixion. And while those disciples probably wished that they had reacted

differently, their flight and their hiding away was probably necessary for the preservation of the future of the church.

And that "common grace" kind of fear was also probably at work later on as the impetus that would drive the disciples and other believing Christians to disperse throughout the other countries, spreading the gospel all over the world.

And no doubt that is a good example of the truth given in Romans 8:28 that tells us,

<sup>28</sup>And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. (Romans 8:28)

God has the wisdom, the power and the ability to take those things that can most often work us harm, and to turn them for our good.

. . . Look again with me at this passage and we can see the clear distinction Jesus is making between the kinds and the effects of the fears that will come to us. Listen again . . .

<sup>4</sup>. . . I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! (Luke 12:4-5)

Here, Jesus is telling us that, while yes, our immediate response to those people who pose a threat to our lives will be fear, we must not let that fear overcome us and turn us away from our faith.

Even if our suffering and our death is filled with the worst kind of misery, that misery cannot compare to the other suffering and death that Jesus warns about here in these words.

I am convinced that no human mind can conceive the severity of the misery and the suffering that takes place within those that are condemned to an eternal death in hell.

As I try to ponder such things, I wonder why God did not make such things more clear to us. It seems that more knowledge about the sufferings of hell would bring the necessary kind of fear to drive us to Him and to His mercy. But He

doesn't. And He truly does know what is best for us. So, He simply says what He says and leaves the response to us.

But throughout these scriptures, God does give us some glimpses of Hell, and of the people who go there. He uses words like Sheol and Hades to describe those mysterious places where the fires of torment are found, a place reserved for those who refuse to receive the Lord Jesus as Savior and Lord.

God also speaks about the eternal fires of hell as being a place of absolute and total darkness, especially "spiritual darkness". And a place of burning fire, bringing continual "sorrow" and "suffering" and "pain".

The Book of Revelation gives not only one of the clearest descriptions of hell, it also reveals to us who will eventually go there.

First, in Revelation chapter 20, speaking about the Millennium, we are told that after a thousand years of peace has passed, the devil will once again be unleashed to tempt the people one last time, but for only a short season. After that, the final judgment will take place and God will deal a final end to sin and to all who participate in it.

Listen to the words of Revelation chapter 20,

<sup>10</sup>The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. <sup>11</sup>Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. <sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. <sup>13</sup>The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup>Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And anyone not found written in the *Book of Life* was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:10-15)

Folks, this is what Jesus was warning about when He said these words . . .

<sup>4</sup>"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will show you whom

you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!(Luke 12:4-5)

In saying these words Jesus was looking ahead to those final days and to the eternal consequences that will face all men and women. And He was being faithful and calling out a warning to anyone who will listen, that there absolutely will come a day of judgment when every man and every woman will stand before Him and be judged for all that they have done on this earth.

And then in Revelation chapter 21, God speaks further about that great and terrible day of judgment. Listen to those words!

<sup>5</sup>Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new . . . . <sup>6</sup>. . . "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. <sup>7</sup>He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. <sup>8</sup>But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."(Revelation 21:5-8)

As we read these and other words of scripture like them, we who have the Lord Jesus as our Savior know that we must not fear, but that we can rest confidently in the knowledge that we ourselves can never lose our salvation and suffer the burning pits of hell that are warned about here. We truly are eternally saved.

But not so, everyone. Folks, some of the people we hold most dear do not have the Lord Jesus as their Savior, making these warnings from Him ever so serious and solemn for them.

The eternal burning sulfur fires of hell are too great a penalty to pay for such a short time of sin here on this earth. And so, you and I must take up this call of the Lord Jesus, calling anyone and everyone we know to turn and to repent of their sins and be saved.

Listen again to these words and I'll close.

<sup>4</sup>"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup>But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!(Luke 12:4-5)

Let's pray.